

kept under constant watch to observe the moulting. On 4th April, 1996 at 1000 hrs when I left for college both the lizards were normal and one of them was sitting on the bottom. Around 1230 hrs when I returned from college I saw some loose skin on the head of one lizard, which was sitting on the floor of the jar. From this it is presumed that the loosening of skin may have started an hour before i.e. around 1100 or 1130 hrs. The process of shedding of skin was complete by 1800 hrs. i.e. complete shedding took 6.5 to 7.00 hours. During this period slight movement of the moulting lizard was observed but the lizard did not seem to show any sign of restlessness or uneasiness. After the shedding of its skin, 2/3rd of its moult (except the lower portion of the snout) was eaten by one of the two lizards.

This observation is in contradiction to the earlier observation of Prasad (1916) taken at Panipat

which states that the process of moulting was completed in 52 hours. He also mentioned that the animal was very restless and rubbed against the sides of the glass jar in which it was kept. Such peculiar behaviour could be due to the ectoparasitic infection of reddish 'ticks' or mites which, he mentioned, were on the body of the lizard and did not come off with the cast, but bored through it and remained attached to the animal. Restlessness was not observed in the present investigation as the animal was free from ticks or mites. However it confirms Prasad's (1916), observation that skin is shed in pieces.

June 4, 1996

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23. OCCURRENCE OF THE FAT TAILED GECKO, *EUBLEPHARIS HARDWICKII* GREY (SAURIA: GEKKONIDAE) WITH REMARKS ON THE VARIATION IN CERTAIN TAXONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

(With one plate)

A fat tailed lizard was captured in Aushgram village of Burdwan District, West Bengal on 6th April, 1995, and kept in the Ecological Park for a few days and then brought to the Zoology Department of Burdwan University, West Bengal, India.

The colour of the head and the body is deep tobacco brown above with one 10 mm broad cream coloured transverse band at the middle of the body and another similar 7.5 mm broad band at the junction of the body and tail. There is a cream coloured "V" shaped narrow band round the neck extending to some extent towards the body proper on one side, and upto the tip of the snout through upper labials on the otherside. The belly is creamy

white. One brown spot is noted on each hind limb. The tail is bluish with deep brown spots; the tip is brown. The head and body measures 100 mm and the tail 45 mm.

BEHAVIOUR

After capture, the animal starved for the first two months. Then gradually it started feeding on soft-bodied insects like dragonfly, moth, butterfly, grasshopper, mosquitoes etc., but never took hard, chitinised insects indicating a selective feeding habit. It ate a few hatchlings of the common house lizard. It is nocturnal but moves in artificial darkness during day time. The lizard moves or walks solely on its

feet and digits, keeping its whole body off the ground. It cannot move or walk on a vertical wall but sometimes raises the whole body vertically with the support of the forelimbs on the wall and the tip of the tail on the ground. Information regarding the natural habitat of this lizard is not well known.

IDENTIFICATION AND REMARKS:

Four species of the Fat-tailed Gecko belonging to genus *Eublepharis* Grey are so far known from the Indian region, of which *E. hardwickii* Grey is known to occur in the Eastern Indian states with particularly in Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal (Smith, 1935). The present specimen has been identified as *Eublepharis hardwickii* Grey (Family Gekkonidae) by the Herpetology Department of Zoological Survey of India. The Accession Registrar of the National Zoological collection (Z.S.I. Calcutta) reveals that a single specimen was collected and reported for the first time from the southern part of West Bengal by a British scientist in 1858. The collection of the present specimen is therefore significant as the second report of the species after a lapse of 137 years. The present record of the specimen signifies interesting zoogeographical implications in terms

of its occurrence and rarity. In addition, the present specimen exhibits a noteworthy variation in its measurement (145 mm. vs 195 mm as referred by Smith, 1935) and colouration or banding pattern (a single creamy band at the base of the tail vs 4-5 creamy bands as referred by Smith, 1935). The tail of the present specimen is dotted with deep brown spots instead of bands as described by Smith (1935). In spite of these variations, it is not possible to describe this specimen as a new variety, since the present find is based on a single specimen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are indebted to Dr. S.K. Talukdar, Scientist, Division of Herpetology, Zoological Survey of India for identifying the specimen and valuable suggestions.

June 4, 1996

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24. *CALLOPHIS NIGRESCENS* (GUNTHER), (SERPENTES: ELAPIDAE) A COLOUR VARIATION FROM SILENT VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, KERALA

Gunther (1864) described the colour characteristics of *Callophis nigrescens* as having dark blackish ash or black upper side and uniformly red ventral side. Upper part of the head is symmetrically marbled with black, a black spot below the eye, another descending from the occipital to the angle of the mouth, a black horse-shoe like marking is present on the collar with the convexity directed forwards. A narrow black vertebral line slightly edged with yellow runs from the collar to the tip of

the tail. A series of small ovate black spots, indistinctly ridged with a whitish tint, is present along each side of the trunk, which disappears posteriorly. The tail is coloured like the body without black rings. Later, Smith (1943) described three colour forms of *Callophis nigrescens*. (1) Pale reddish or brownish above with 5 black stripes on the body, a vertebral and two lateral pairs, and three stripes on the tail, the outermost stripes being on scale rows one and two. The top of the head is black with light regular